

The Circuit Writer



NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES AND HISTORY
Northern New Jersey Conference, The United Methodist Church

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WHEN THE CIRCUIT RIDER CAME

A poem written by the Rev. Richard Bowen Lockwood of Stony Point, N.Y., and first published in the Rockland County [Methodist] Messenger (Haverstraw, N.Y.) in 1900.

Contributed by Mr. Daniel deNoyelles of Thiells, N.Y.

In the little state of Jersey, in the years now long ago,
A rider came with saddle bags, his heart with zeal aglow.
He rode upon a dappled grey with flowing tail and mane
And the gospel fires were lighted when the circuit rider came!

His homespun clothes were ancient style but fire shown in his eye;
And he had no "paper sermon" and no stilted whining cry;
And in the low log schoolhouse he preached with might and main
And the people brought the candles when the circuit rider came!

His parish was among the hills, some seventy miles around,
And he entered every open door wherever it was found.
And he never failed of coming 'mid the snow or sleet or rain,
For they jammed the old log schoolhouse when the circuit rider came.

Grandma laid aside her knitting, in her white cap looking sweet,
The children donned their Sunday best and were all clean and neat,
The poultry in the barnyard went hiding down the lane,
For there was "pot pie" in the making when the circuit rider came!

The sweetmeats were all ready, and the cakes and pies were done.
There were pickles, tarts and doughnuts and dainty sugar buns;
There were custards, creams and jellies and goodies without name,
And a kingly board was spread when the circuit rider came.

Like the school marm 'round he boarded' and was a welcomed guest,
And was put into the spare room bed and had the very best;
The back log in the open fire, like the candles, was aflame,
And the peaceful pipes were lighted when the circuit rider came!

They had no piping organ then and no operatic choir
No stained glass windows of the saints, no bell or towering spire;
And the people all sang grandly, and with every sweet refrain
The incense of true worship spread when the circuit rider came.

(continued)

But now this all is changed, these riders come no more;
The saddle bags are laid aside and the circuit days are o'er.
We press the grand cathedral aisles, but we miss the old time flame
That stirred the loving, trusted heart when the circuit rider came.

The old log home has passed away, and those happy days are o'er;
Essays are read by electric light, and the candles burn no more,
Chickens and turkeys roost in peace, with no squawking in the lane
As it was in the days of old when the circuit rider came!

Richard Bowen Lockwood had every right to remember the good old days, for he lived to be the oldest ministerial member of the Newark Conference both in years and in ministry. Fifty of his eighty-eight years were spent riding the circuits of northern New Jersey and nearby Rockland County, N. Y. He died in Springfield, N.J. March 24, 1913. He was received into the New Jersey Conference in 1851, sixty years before the Newark Conference was organized. His appointments shows the extent of his travels: Harmony, Dover, Columbia and Hainesburg, Milford, Phillipsburg, Somerville, Belleville, Newton, Nyack, Elizabeth, Paterson, Jersey City, Phillipsburg, Otisville, West Town and Unionville, Milford, Broadway, New Providence, Piermont, and Suffern. It was during his final appointment, Thiells, N.Y. 1891-1901, that he penned this nostalgic poem.

LOCAL CHURCH HISTORY CONTEST - Awards to be presented

during 1981 Conference

Several local churches have submitted histories of their churches published during the calendar year 1980 for our eighth annual LOCAL CHURCH HISTORY RECOGNITION CONTEST. Two awards will be presented during the June 1981 meeting of the Annual Conference.

If your church has published a history of your local church in 1980, we urge you to enter it in the contest now. Large or small, pamphlet or cloth bound, mimeographed or printed--all histories published during 1980 are eligible. Each history will become part of the Conference's permanent collection.

MAIL ONE COPY TO: Dr. Kenneth E. Rowe, Drew University Library, Madison, N.J. 07940 by February 1, 1981.

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY OLD CHURCH RECORD BOOKS LATELY?

Your Conference Commission is anxious to gather into its historical collection at Drew University records of disbanded churches in our annual conference. Have you seen any lately? Do you know where some may be? The commission urges clergy and layfolk alike to play detective and help us to record the records of churches which in other times and places played a lively role in building the church.

Contact our chief detective: the Rev. Paul Spiecker (684-4816)

GROUND BROKEN FOR CHURCH HISTORICAL CENTER AT DREW

Commending Drew University for "a remarkable gesture, which demonstrates a determination to serve the Church," Bishop L. Scott Allen, chairman of the Commission on Archives and History, broke ground October 10, for a new United Methodist National Archives building.

The \$2.7 million structure--to be built by the university and maintained, for the most part, by the Church--is scheduled for occupancy by the spring of 1982. It will replace outgrown facilities in Lake Junaluska, N.C., with ultramodern, energy-efficient quarters just minutes from the rail and air hubs of metropolitan New York.

The combination under one roof of Drew's large collection of Methodistica, together with the resources and records of the commission, will result in an unparalleled center for Methodist historical studies that promises to attract professional historians and United Methodist laymen alike.

In addition to 9,000 square feet of library space, the building will provide 50,000 cubic feet of vault storage--enough, at the present rate of accession, to house the archives without overflow for the next two decades.

Joseph Rizzo, project manager for the Hillier Group of Princeton, architects, lauded commission and university officials for their "enthusiastic support of an almost drastic approach to energy conservation" in plans for the building. Energy-saving features will range from hot water solar panels on the roof to an air-tight full basement two stories deep and partitioned to isolate storage areas in use from yet-to-be-used space not requiring heating, cooling, or humidity control.

According to Rizzo, the building will "easily surpass" the most rigid standards for cost-effective energy use. "At current fuel costs," he predicted, "it will be possible to heat the building comfortably for an entire season at less than six cents a square foot."

Elaborate security and fire safety systems have been incorporated into the plans; yet the building is expected to be inviting.

Entry will be from a large courtyard directly into an exhibit area. A first-floor conference room in mid-18th century decor will contain books, statuettes, and implements associated with John Wesley, including a cast of his face taken at death.

A library "designed to invite browsing," will occupy the second floor, where the Methodist reference and research collections of the university and the commission will be shelved together for the convenience of users.

For Drew, the new archives building is but one element of a \$12.5 million project that will also include a new library building, to be known as the learning center, and renovation of the present university library. Together with the renovation, the new archives building and learning center will increase campus library stack capacity to at least 900,000 volumes.

CELEBRATING THE HERITAGE:

- EDISON June 1 was "John Christoffersen Sunday" at Wesley Church. Originally in Perth Amboy, Wesley Church began as a mission to Danish and Norwegian Methodists in 1869. Mr. Christoffersen has been a member of the church for 71 years.
- LEBANON Heritage Sunday was celebrated September 14. Dr. Rowe of Drew led an adult seminar on our legacy from Wesley and preached the sermon.
- MADISON "Henry Lambdin Day" was recently held at the Madison Church honoring the retired pastor, superintendent and professor of homiletics. At the worship celebration the choirs sang anthems composed by Dr. Lambdin and the congregational hymns were those he has written. Dr. Lambdin received his first pastoral appointment in 1913 and served actively for the next 50 years.
- MIDLAND PARK On September 14 the Midland Park Church observed Heritage Sunday, which featured the burning of the church mortgage. The service was a replica of one used by John Wesley in the early days of Methodism. Members who joined the church more than fifty years ago were honored during the service.
- NEW CITY, N.Y. Church historian, John Bennet, is writing a history of the New City Church entitled "The First 150 Years." Records of membership, baptisms, funerals and weddings dating back to 1867 have been maintained and examined. When completed it will be one of the most thorough books ever published on the history of a local church.
- STOCKHOLM On October 5th the thoroughly refurbished sanctuary of this congregation was re-dedicated. The preacher for the service was Dr. Henry L. Lambdin, who served the church as his first student charge 69 years ago.
- SUFFERN Heritage Sunday was observed Sunday, July 20. Superintendent Robert Grant brought greetings to the congregation and Dr. Rowe of Drew preached the sermon in historic Wesley Chapel.